

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 18 and 19, as follows:

1-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Previously presented) Catheter for the radiofrequency ablation of tissue, having a pointed tip for piercing insertion into said tissue, comprising at least one pair of bipolar electrodes adapted to function in bipolar mode, each bipolar electrode comprising supply channels adapted for the perfusion of saline solution around the electrodes, the catheter further comprising at least two end electrodes arranged towards opposed ends of the catheter, on either side of the pair of bipolar electrodes, said end electrodes adapted to function in monopolar mode.

14. (Previously presented) Catheter according to claim 13, wherein each bipolar electrode comprises at least two saline solutions supply channels (14a, 15a; 14b, 15b).

15. (Previously presented) Catheter according to claim 13, wherein the liquid supply channels with outlets (15a, 15b) arranged proximate the front and rear ends of the catheter are supplied with the saline solution independently of liquid supply outlets (14a, 14b) arranged proximate the center of the catheter.

16. (Previously presented) Catheter according to claim 13, further comprising a central electrode (8) arranged between the bipolar electrodes (4, 5), the central electrode adapted to function in monopolar mode.

17. (Previously presented) Catheter according to claim 13, further comprising one or more thermocouples (16), said thermocouples being retractably mounted in the catheter and actionable so as to be inserted into tissue surrounding the catheter.

18. (Currently amended) Catheter according to claim ~~13~~ 16, wherein the liquid supply channel outlets are arranged at a distance (B) from the respective central and end monopolar electrodes, that is sufficient to avoid being in a region of coagulated tissue formed around said monopolar electrodes.

19. (Currently amended) Apparatus for radiofrequency ablation of tissue comprising a catheter ~~according to claims 13~~ having a pointed tip for piercing insertion into said tissue, comprising at least one pair of bipolar electrodes adapted to function in bipolar mode, each bipolar electrode comprising supply channels adapted for the perfusion of saline solution around the electrodes, the catheter further comprising at least two end electrodes arranged towards opposed ends of the catheter, on either side of the pair of bipolar electrodes, said end electrodes adapted to function in monopolar mode, and at least two independently controlled pumps for supplying saline solution to separate supply channels of each bipolar electrode.

20. (Previously presented) Apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising a temperature acquisition unit connected to thermocouples of the catheter.

21. (Previously presented) Apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising an RF generator, whereby the independently controlled pumps, RF generator, and temperature acquisition unit are connected to a computing unit, such as a PC, for monitoring and controlling operations.

22. (Previously presented) Method of radiofrequency ablation of tissue, comprising the steps of:

providing a catheter having at least one pair of bipolar electrodes with saline solution supply channels, and at least two monopolar electrodes arranged towards opposed ends of the catheter on either side of the pair of bipolar electrodes;

inserting the catheter into a central region of the volume of tissue to be ablated;

supplying electrical power to the monopolar electrodes to coagulate tissue therearound and seal the puncture performed by the catheter;

perfusing saline solution into the tissue surrounding the bipolar electrodes and supplying electrical RF energy to the bipolar electrodes for thermal ablation.

23. (Previously presented) Method according to claim 22, wherein the step of perfusing saline solution comprises supplying saline solution via supply channels (14a, 14b)

arranged proximate the center of the catheter at a concentration lower than saline solution supplied to outlets (15a, 15b) arranged proximate opposed ends of the catheter.

24. (Previously presented) Method according to claim 22, wherein prior to or during the step of operation of the bipolar electrodes, retractable thermocouples (16) mounted in the catheter are inserted at a certain depth into the surrounding tissue.